



Treatment programs crucial for addicts in our country

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“We expect the Affordable Care Act to pay for treatment,” Russ Hopper wrote in Sunday’s Daily News. “Instead, it limits treatment under its ‘medical necessity’ clause, discharging people after a few days, which results in relapse and even death for many.”

The vast majority of those struggling with addiction will never be able to overcome the grasp it has on their lives without substantial help from trained professionals. Most addicts desperately want to be free of their dependence on drugs, but in almost all cases, this is impossible without outside assistance.

The reality is we still prefer to lock addicts up rather than provide the resources needed to help them overcome their affliction. This makes absolutely no sense medically, economically or ethically.

A significant proportion of the 2.4 million people imprisoned in the U.S. are there for drug-related offenses. Although estimates vary, the average cost of incarcerating someone for a year seems to be around \$35,000.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse conservatively estimates that every dollar invested in treatment programs yields a return of around \$12 in reduced legal fees and health care expenditures as well as higher productivity at work.

Treatment costs substantially less than incarceration, but it is only effective if those administering care are allowed to rely upon their experience and expert judgment. The decision as to when a person should be discharged, for example, should be left entirely to the trained professionals providing the treatment. It should not be left to the spreadsheet enthusiasts charged with keeping immediate costs under control.

Programs such as Questhouse can indeed make a huge difference in the lives of those suffering from addiction. The services provided by these residential facilities, in the overall scheme of things, constitute an invaluable investment in the lives of those they serve.

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